

herents as America does her citizens, from many lands and of many tongues, preaching at the present time to citizens of this country in no less than seventeen different languages.

This fact discounts the notion that some have that Lutherans are a German or a Scandinavian church. They are truly American in constituency and in spirit.

In faith Lutherans are one. In organization, which to the Lutheran is secondary, they have been separated, but through the Joint Celebration of the blessings of 400 years of Protestantism they have drawn very close together, with the result that several of the most important bodies now have under consideration a constitution for the proposed United Lutheran Church of America. This will mean when fully consummated that the church which stands unitedly and unequivocally for the Christ as the God-Man, the Saviour of the world, and for the inspiration of the entire Bible and for its great confessions unaltered and subscribed to by about half of the Protestant world, will, as the third Protestant body in point of numbers in America, be one of the dominating religious forces for the making of the religious spirit and the development of the Christian consciousness of America.

THE REFORMATION AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

Religious liberty, the right of the individual Christian to his own interpretation of what the holy Scripture teaches as to faith and duty, was not recognized by law in any country in the world at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The laws of all Christian lands then compelled the acceptance of one form of the Christian religion by all subjects, and everywhere recognized the authority of the pope of Rome as the head of the Church, clothed with absolute authority, even to the extent of requiring the penalty of death for heresy.

The first great step in securing religious liberty was taken by Martin Luther, on December 10, 1520, when he burned in public the papal bull or decree which threatened him with excommunication for heretical opinions. While Luther began the Reformation by nailing Ninety-five Theses to the door of the cathedral at Wittenberg, Germany, on October 31, 1517, yet it was the burning of the bull which declared his separation from the Church of Rome.

The struggle in Germany for religious liberty begun by Luther, led to bloody wars, with few intervals of peace, extending over more than a century. It was not until 1648, that the right of kingdoms such as Prussia, Hanover, and Saxony to be Protestant in religion, was acknowledged by the other states of Germany.

In Switzerland, the struggle for religious liberty began with the teachings of Ulrich

Zwingli, and in this land, too, bloody strife ensued between Catholics and Protestants. Zwingli was killed while acting as chaplain at a battle fought at Kappel in 1531. The strong Swiss cantons of Zurich, Berne, and Geneva, sided with the Reformation.

In France the struggle for religious liberty was also bitter with wars between the Huguenots and the Catholics, and found a culmination in the Massacre of St. Bartholomew in 1572 in which thousands upon thousands of Prot-

estants were massacred. Protestantism was tolerated in France from 1598 to 1685, but renewed persecution under Louis XIV, after 1685, drove out of the country at least five hundred thousand persons, and the refugees were scattered to every country in Europe and to the American colonies. For one hundred and two years thereafter Protestantism was officially dead in France. The restoration of the Protestant churches in the year 1802 was decreed by Napoleon Bonaparte.

In England at the time of the Reformation, many

martyrs had already suffered for their loyalty to religious liberty. Among these, the names which stand out most notably are those of William Tyndale, who translated the New Testament into English in 1526, and Archbishop Cranmer of the Church of England. The latter was burned at the stake in 1556, during the reign of Bloody Mary. When Queen Elizabeth came to the throne, though she was a Protestant, there was no real religious liberty in England for persons who declined to conform to the Church of England. It is only in recent years that the rights of dissenters have been recognized.

In Scotland, the struggle for religious liberty began with the martyrdom of Patrick Hamilton in 1528, and reached the first stage of progress through the Reformation in 1560, led by John Knox. Scotland, however, was not finally free from the tyranny of the Episcopal government established in England until 1689, and the advent of William of Orange to the throne.

In Holland, the struggle for liberty was long and arduous. The first martyrs suffered in 1523. The people resisted both Spanish and Roman Catholic tyranny, led by such men as William the Silent, and finally secured independence in 1579. Holland was the first country in Europe actually to become Protestant, and was often the refuge for English dissenters. It was from Holland that the Pilgrim Fathers in 1620 set sail for New England.

In other European lands such as Italy, Spain, and Portugal, the Reformation failed, and religious liberty was unknown in any measure until the nineteenth century. In Russia there is today no such thing as religious liberty. The Greek Catholic Church is the National Church. Certain sects are tolerated, but that which is tolerated can be subjected to severe legal re-

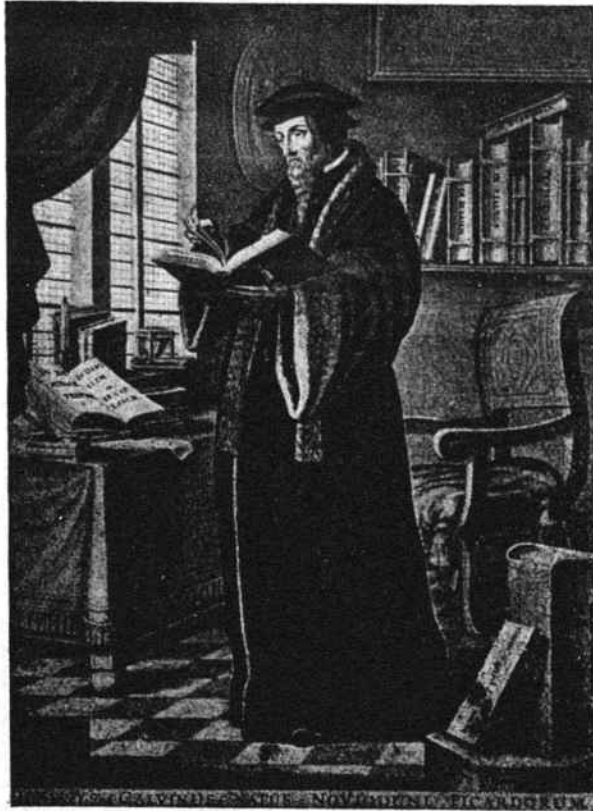
strictions, and, if the demand is made, to persecution. Toleration is not liberty.

The only country today in the civilized world, in which there has been for nearly a century absolute religious liberty, is the United States of America. America has now no State Church. At first, certain of the colonies like Virginia recognized the Church of England as the State Church, and the colonies of Massachusetts and Connecticut established the Congregational Church as such. The Congregational establishment of religion was abolished in Connecticut in 1818, and in Massachusetts in 1834. The only American colony in which there was real liberty of religious opinion from the beginning, was that of Pennsylvania, and the inscription on the Liberty Bell placed there in 1752, "Proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof," Lev. 25:10, was prophetic of the coming of the day when there would be true liberty in the United States.

It is evident from the above facts that the connection of Church and State was the main source of the power which denied religious liberty to men and women. The Roman Catholic Church it should be said, has always declared that its duty was simply to find men guilty of heresy and then to turn them over to the State for final punishment. But the State in Europe at the time of the Reformation was completely under the domination of the Roman Church, and the laws of the State were so constructed as to punish heresy with death.

The first Christian leader to take the step which made possible the securing of true religious liberty in America, was the Baptist, Roger Williams, the founder of the colony of Rhode Island, who demanded the separation of Church and State.

The first organized American Church that declared, as a Church, for religious liberty, was the Presbyterian. There is in this twentieth century throughout the English-speaking world, liberty of opinion. The only form that religious intolerance assumes, is the assumption on the part of certain churches that they occupy in matters of church order and government a place superior to that of certain other churches. There are still limitations upon religious liberty in many European countries. It is hoped that the time will come when the conditions of religious liberty everywhere may



John Calvin.



Luther Nailing His Theses to the Church Door.

be such as appear in chapter twenty-three of the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church, in the following words:

"It is the duty of civil magistrates to protect the Church of our common Lord, without giving the preference to any denomination of Christians above the rest, in such a manner that all ecclesiastical persons whatever shall enjoy the full, free, and unquestioned liberty of discharging every part of their sacred functions, without violence or danger. And, as Jesus Christ hath appointed a regular government and discipline in his Church, no law